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AUTHOR Boyd, Stephen D.
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ABSTRACT

To "consult" with teachers requires making the right people aware that the consultant is available and that the consultant has something to contribute to their skills. Acquiring invitations for consulting work is the main obstacle consultants must overcome. They must get to know school administrators, curriculum supervisors, state department representatives, and other persons in a position to bring in consultants. One way to accomplish this is to offer consulting services to campus education personnel in charge of inservice programs. A second way is to teach graduate level courses, which frequently enroll elementary and secondary school teachers. A third way is to become part of the staff for training state employees. Suggestions that may be helpful in the programs conducted by consultants include the following: (1) condense classroom material to what can be covered in specific time blocks of one to three hours, (2) decide on an area of concentration and stay with it, (3) distribute a handout containing the basic principles of the session and the consultant's name and phone number, and (4) actively seek out opportunities to "help" by consulting. (HTH)

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Stephen D. Boyd

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HELPING BY CONSULTING

To "consult" with teachers, one has to let the right people know that you are available for consulting purposes, and that you have something to contribute to their skills in the various areas of communication (I define consulting loosely in this context as providing information and answering questions in a setting for individuals or groups). I would like to spend my time discussing two matters in the area of "Helping by Consulting." First I want to look at ways that communication educators can find opportunities to work with teachers as consultants, and then second, discuss what it is that I do when I am consulting.

To have people invite you to be a consultant can often be the main obstacle to overcome. You have to become known to the people who are in positions to bring you in as a consultant. To get to know school administrators, curriculum supervisors, and state department representatives is vital. I have tried to do this in three ways. First, I offered my services to the education person on our campus who was in charge of inservice programs. Through him, I developed and taught full day seminars in effective listening and nonverbal communication. Representatives of a variety of school districts in the area attended these seminars. Because of the response to these programs, I was invited to several

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school districts to present programs to their teachers. In addition, I had available bibliographies in both listening and nonverbal to hand out to interested individuals at those initial seminars. This gave me an opportunity to talk individually with people who were serious about learning more about oral communication in their teaching. In several instances I was able to develop one-on-one discussions about their needs and problems when handing out bibliographies.

Second, our department offers a graduate course for the education department in "Oral Communication in the Classroom," which I developed and teach every other summer. We have teachers from both elementary and secondary levels who enroll in this course. The thrust of the course is incorporating oral communication skills in teaching subject matter. Out of this course I have received invitations to conduct specific programs and have been asked for specific help. During the class, I make the point that I am available to give advice or to help in any way I can to promote oral communication in the school systems.

Third, I was able to become a part of the training staff for the State of Kentucky employees. It is important to get to know the people in charge of training/development at the state level. I was invited to do the communication segment of a regular training program the State of Kentucky provides for hundreds of employees. After that experience I was asked to develop a two day program on oral presentation skills. I teach that program for them, and on occasions I have class

members from the state department of education who have specific responsibilities for recommending people and programs for school districts throughout the state. In addition, these people belong to professional organizations which have need for programs in a variety of areas. Because of both of these situations I have had opportunities to consult/train/speak to teachers and administrators throughout the State of Kentucky. To be helpful to teachers in communication areas, you have to become known to the right people in your state. Do this by offering inservice programs through your education department in the areas of communication with which you feel comfortable. Offer graduate courses through the education department, or your own department, and get to know people in the training division of state government and offer to do programs for them. I hope it is obvious that in all of the above you must have programs/materials which are valuable and useful to teachers. Deliver a lot and you will have many opportunities to help by consulting.

The second part of my paper is to discuss specifically what has been helpful to me in the programs I conduct. First, learn to condense classroom material to what can be covered in specific time blocks of one to three hours. Give them something to "take home" in a short period of time. Use examples to which teacher in whatever level you are working with can relate. Find out about the area you want to work with and develop specific applications of communication to what

those teachers do. If the teacher does not see immediate specific application then there is very little interest.

Second, decide on an area of concentration and stay with it. I try to limit my involvement to developing listening skills and improving classroom teaching style. In a typical one hour program on effective listening, I will talk about the importance of effective listening and provide some evidence. I do this to try to help them see the value of placing emphasis on listening in the classroom. Then I provide some specific points on how as a teacher one can become a better role model as a listener. If I am doing a three hour program I add to the above some specific techniques for helping the students become better listeners. At the end I make available a listening bibliography. The other program I conduct emphasizes the spoken word. If it is an hour program I give examples of the power of the spoken word, and then make points to stress the teacher's role as a model of oral communication to students. If I have a three hour program, I add specific techniques on how we can develop oral communication activities to facilitate learning irregardless of the subject matter we teach. Whatever kind of program I am conducting, I always have a handout with my name and address so that if there are further questions or needs, it is easy to reach me. I also want the teachers to feel that I have provided them specific information to take back to the classroom, and the handout usually includes some

basic principles that seek to meet that goal.

Probably the most important consideration is to actively seek out opportunities to "help" by consulting. We may have great ideas and methods for helping teachers in communication areas, but if we do not make specific efforts to reach these people, we may have difficulty sharing our research and experience.

Stephen D. Boyd
Communications Department
Northern Kentucky University
Highland Heights, KY.